

Touring History: Guidebooks and the Commodification of the Salem Witch Trials

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The documentary *Witch City*, a scathing critique of tourism in Salem, Massachusetts, stirred tremendous discussion upon its premiere on Boston public television in 1997. Penned by Salem native Joe Cultrera, the film charts the city's transformation from a blue-collar town into "a sort of witchcraft Disneyland" overrun by callous tourists, unscrupulous businesses, and a "confusing mix of fact and fiction" (*Witch City*) in preparation for the tercentenary of the Witch Trials in 1992. The filmmakers draw upon interviews with, among others, Elie Weisel and Arthur Miller to distinguish historical knowledge from kitsch and to shame businesses thought exploiting the Trials. Vilified by many residents and hailed as an earnest cry against commercialization by others, *Witch City* is a significant "performance text" (Denzin) that asks how local citizens understand their relation to judgments of the past and for the future.

The film is also a record of the public debate in Salem that arose during a period of intense national and international gaze. Despite the filmmakers' pleas, tourism in Salem continues unabated—especially during Halloween—and its consequences remain sharply contested.¹ Countless performances now emphasize supernatural elements or the occult, loosely tied to the Trials or witchcraft. Recent attractions, for example, include the Haunted Footsteps Ghost Tour, the Museum of Myths and Monsters, the Spellbound

Museum, Dracula's Castle, Strega restaurant, numerous boutiques dedicated to psychic phenomena, and a statue of Samantha from the television show *Bewitched*. In response, the local government has actively promoted other aspects of Salem's history, especially Nathaniel Hawthorne and its maritime legacy; a renovation of the Peabody Essex Museum formed the cornerstone for this movement.

All that alarms *Witch City*, however, bears a much more complex history than the film suggests. Salem has drawn tourists since the 1850s; concerns over the commercial usage of its notorious history promptly followed. Two loosely-defined groups have sparred over Salem's representation in popular media and public consciousness since the inception of tourism. The first are local business owners who recognize opportunity in the commodification of the Witch Trials. The second are local (often amateur) historians and preservationists who decry pervasive witchcraft imagery as indecorous. Adding to this complicated exchange, tourist guidebooks to Salem have been in circulation for well over a century, written to support both perspectives.

Studies of Salem tourism (Hill, "Salem;" McAllister; Rosenthal; White; Wright) do not explore guidebooks at length.² This article does so and argues that they reveal an important site for deliberation within a local public sphere. Reading

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guidebooks as marks of competing political attitudes, this article analyzes several representatives and follows their permutations, responding to and influencing tourist expectations. The aim is to map traces of ideological shifts wrought through changes in guidebook content and form. First, this article proposes an appreciation of guidebooks as a vibrant form of public discourse. It then describes the contest over commodification of the Witch Trials as it evolves throughout the guidebooks, complemented by other influential forms of popular media and ephemera, to provide a genealogy of the debate. It concludes with a brief summary of the relationship between tourism and the rhetorical uses of history.

Tourist Guidebooks as Rhetorical Practice

The development of New England tourism is well-documented and implicates the invention of American identity and the ascent of a middle-class (Brown; Conforti; Purchase; Schaffer; Sears), yet studies of guidebooks as a rhetorical force in this process are few in number (Gassan "Birth" and "First"). Guidebooks are, however, a means to understand the reception of socio-political orientations towards the past, present, and future. They are a collusion of historical fact, entertainment, and moral discourse, bound together in a way that poses as neutral, objective, and stable reality. On the one hand, they provide a record of tourist and resident interests through time. On the other, they constitute local and tourist identities and site sacralizations. These mutually sustaining practices implore private readers to identify with a limited set of interpretations, actions, and subject positions that in turn influence public policy. They are, in brief, performances directing audiences toward certain judgments affecting the polis and the state.

Tourism itself is significant rhetorical activity, the arousal of emotional and intellectual interests through manipulation of communicative forms and aesthetic displays (Ben-Amos and Weissberg; Edensor; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett). Guidebooks

legitimize certain discursive practices (such as commodification or commemoration) at places of concentrated tourist behavior. To examine their composition is to observe attempts to control a community's symbolic resources during periods of flux and endurance. Diachronic shifts in guidebook organization and narrative both reflect and encourage different social organization for tourist and resident participation. They are important, therefore, not only as a gathering of facts but also as a narrative advancing particular attitudes, for even seemingly innocuous guidebook expressions establish channels of power by defining what is to be seen and ignored. Guidebooks embody a totalizing system of worth, but one emerging within a competition over values between locals, tourists, and popular media. Rival guidebooks often advance antagonistic recommendations, interpretations of the past, and acts of identification, so they must be examined critically regarding the ways they might serve a dominant or alternative worldview. (African-American, immigrant, and women's contributions to Salem, for example, were largely ignored by guidebooks until very recently.)

Involved in arguments to define the historically significant, guidebooks are instrumental in the practice of public memory, a rhetorical use of history. As Tim Edensor suggests, the "need to order, rank, and consume the 'most' significant constitutes a central experience in much contemporary tourism" (75); guidebooks contribute to this hierarchy. Unlike the durable institutions they recommend, the transitory character of guidebooks casts their social action in unassuming form, so their political significance is easily overlooked. For while libraries, museums, monuments, ruins, and related displays set in stone testify to discourses meant to survive the vicissitudes of time, guidebooks are disposable, "mere" souvenirs. Rhetorically, they do not convey magnitude, but this mitigated status is deceptive, precisely because guidebooks instruct the reader *how to experience* the durable. Read upon a spot deemed significant, their narratives transform emptiness into dramatic stages, ordering historical space out of undefined place.

Although the assertion that various groups compete over representation is certainly not novel, the specific case of Salem is worth exploration for numerous reasons. First, the Witch Trials occupy a prominent niche in American—and international—public discourse concerning social justice; their remembrance impinges upon actions taken for civil rights in the present and future. Second, the venerable history of Salem guidebooks provides a substantial report of the decades in which tourism and consumer capitalism emerged as a primary socioeconomic influence in middle-class identity. Third, this data reveals the suasive confluences of other forms of public address (such as literature and media) in the creation of audiences for the ratification of particular ideologies or interpretations of history. Fourth, Salem tourism demonstrates the reception of ideology as lived experience in local public spheres that impact the movements of private and social bodies. In short, the analysis of Salem guidebooks examines how attitudes toward history are forged and brought to bear on people's lives.

The Invention of Salem Tourism

Salem thrived as a maritime and manufacturing center from the late-eighteenth until the mid-twentieth century, and its upper-class residents' wealth financed several public parks and educational institutions. The nation's oldest museum, now known as the Peabody Essex, was founded in 1799 as the East India Marine Society.³ Salem entered the mid-nineteenth century an eclectic town with well-established families, rising interest in new technologies, and increasing immigrant populations. Its historical notoriety did not, however, mark it as an obvious destination for the emerging tourist industry, then a practice exclusive to the wealthy. Circumstances changed in 1850, when native son Nathaniel Hawthorne published *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables* the following year. Both helped rekindle national attention in the Puritan ideology that culminated in the Trials. As Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*

would influence Salem tourism a century later, Hawthorne's fantastical recreations echoed in American popular consciousness and resounded with similar contributions from the city's intelligentsia. In 1867, for example, Charles Upham published his magnum opus, *Salem Witchcraft*. It was preceded by his *Lectures on Witchcraft* (1831) and his well-known political quarrels with Hawthorne (Nissenbaum).

Popular media wasted little time capitalizing on this piqued interest. The January 26, 1856, edition of *Ballou's Pictorial*, for example, features a two-page "Sketches of Salem" spread and effectively produced the city's first touring guide. Designating Salem "quite attractive to those who love to dwell upon the memorials of the past" (56), the article mentions East India Marine Hall, Hawthorne's Custom House, and "Gallows Hill," the presumed site of the executions. But *Ballou's* Salem was relatively immune to visitors' traffic. "With the exception of a few localities through which the tide of commercial activity flows during the busier hours of the day," it concludes, "[Salem] unites the quiet of the country with the conveniences of city life" (57).

The Trials inform the genesis of Salem's tourist market. Hawthorne's novels and Upham's histories inspired energetic discussions about them (Schultz). Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Hawthorne's schoolmate at Bowdoin, added fuel with his *Giles Corey of the Salem Farms* (1868). Soon thereafter the Trials first demonstrated commercial viability. Two of the earliest Salem souvenirs—a stereoview from 1869 and a trade card from 1878—depict the "Old Witch House," a structure owned by Witch Trials judge John Corwin. The stereoview bears a foretelling note:

The Witchcraft Delusion of 1692 has attracted universal attention since the date of its occurrence, and will, in all coming ages, render the name Salem notable throughout the world.

Its brief narrative further describes the Trials and ambiguous but gruesome occult rituals, including "eating red bread and drinking blood," and encourages visitation of original documents in

the Salem court houses. The trade card likewise concurs that the historic house “is a great centre of attraction to visitors in Salem” while advertising a foot salve.

Interest in the Trials grew steadily as their bi-centenary approached. In the years between Hawthorne and Upham’s contributions, Samuel Fowler and Samuel Drake reissued Cotton Mather’s and Robert Calef’s commentaries, and William Woodward published original records. They were followed by Zachariah Mudge’s *Witch Hill: A History of Salem Witchcraft* (1870), and two collaborations by Salemites: Charles Webber and Winfield Nevins’ *Old Naumkeag* (1877) and Charles Osgood and Henry Batchelder’s *Historical Sketch of Salem* (1879). Concurrently, the Salem Willows amusement park opened in 1880. All led to a spike in tourism in the 1880s, as the practice emerged nationally as salient middle-class activity.

Salem, Incorporated

The first *Visitor’s Guide to Salem* appeared in 1880. Originating in earlier pamphlet guides to the museums, it was written by Henry Batchelder, co-author of the aforementioned *Historical Sketch*; later editions also attribute T. F. Hunt. This guide consists of fifty-four pages of touring information and thirty-two additional pages of advertisements for local businesses that hail the birth of consumer capitalism. The *Introduction* addresses tourists and residents equally and encourages all to peruse the advertisements, assuring “that portion of the book should not be regarded as less interesting and valuable than its other pages” (3). This comingling of desires for knowledge with desires for commodities and an appreciation of historical sites with a moral implication to purchase items sets the tone for future editions.

The book, which notes 30,000 visitors annually, generally furnishes information about Salem attractions in equal measure. Its two-page historical sketch spans Roger Conant’s 1626 arrival to the American Civil War. Hawthorne enjoys a

budding celebrity. Salem’s maritime success looms heavily, and only two lines concern the Trials. When further attention to them appears in a later chapter, it is balanced by references to other colonial and Revolutionary events. For example, in its “Points of Historical Interest,” the book details the “Roger Williams House.” This is the same building as the “Old Witch House” (Williams was believed to reside there before Corwin) but the entry emphasizes Rhode Island’s founder rather than the Trials judge.⁴ The entry on “Witch Hill” reads:

Although not much is to be seen at Witch Hill, or from its summit, no stranger should omit visiting it as the scene of the closing acts of the tragedies enacted in “Salem Village” two centuries ago. It is difficult to realize, standing on the spot where the fatal gallows was erected, that a delusion so ridiculously founded could have taken possession of the people so forcibly as to lead them to convict even their leaders and their own kin of “dealing with the devil.” But such was their love for the right and their fear of God, that they became so powerfully influenced, after once the delusion obtained a foothold, that they thought only of ridding the community of the emissaries of the evil one. It is impossible for us to appreciate the conditions surrounding the people who were actors in the terrible scenes of those few months of 1692. (9)

This commentary is an early example of guide-book moral discourse, a model for interpretation and judgment. Structured as an objective description of history, a regime of facts, it contextualizes the Trials and offers an absolution ritual for contemporary visitors, who are rhetorically separated from the people of 1692 by time and by attitude. This maneuver establishes distance between the *lieu de memoir* and the tourist so as not to render the experience unpleasant. But the statement also occurs in a book dedicated to advertisements, another experience of fascination predicated on pleasantries; sutured together, being there and buying there culminate in the text as worthwhile civic action.

The *Visitor's Guide* would continue for eight decades and pass from two publishers (Henry Ives and Eben Putnam) to the Essex Institute. Its revisions portray changing attitudes surrounding the preservation–commodification nexus. The 1888 guide, for example, is ninety-six pages, nearly double the length of the 1880 edition. The alterations entail brief additions about the Essex Institute and Peabody collections. A section on Salem businesses is moved from the end to the front. The 1892 edition, marking the bicentenary of the Trials, is 177 pages. According to the editor, 25,000 copies had been published in the preceding years. The organization remains close to previous versions, and although the Trials received more attention, they share roughly the same total pages as other historical events. Four new chapters promote burgeoning tourist interests: natural and geological phenomena, portraits and artwork, souvenir shops, and Hawthorne, who receives a hero's salute. The bicentenary guidebook excludes most advertisements, explaining:

That part of the Guide devoted to the business interests of Salem is not treated fully, for, it is very evident that visitors to Salem, the number of which is each year increasing, are drawn here by its historic associations and by those of its institutions which have something to attract the sightseer and summer tourist. No attempt has been made to make this an advertising guide, only to the extent of calling attention to certain specialties which tourists might desire as souvenirs. (viii)

The “Salem witch” image and brand took root in this edition, but appears among a few privileged advertisements in the back and not the information pages. Unlike the relatively balanced appearance in early guidebooks, however, the Trials and their association with witchcraft formed the crown of Salem businesses during the bicentenary. Jeweler Daniel Low led the charge; in 1891 the company introduced souvenir spoons bearing a flying witch and launched a national collecting frenzy (McAllister 125). Parker Brothers followed suit with *Ye Witchcraft Game*. C. H. and J. Price marketed a skin lotion under the “Witch Cream”

brand, and Frank Cousins offered souvenir photographs of Trials locations at his shop, The Beehive. Americans outside Salem also took interest in the anniversary. *Harpers* published Mary Wilkin's play, “Giles Corey, Yeoman” (1892) and John Musick released a novel, *A Witch of Salem* (1893). In December 1891 *New England Magazine* initiated a “Stories of Salem Witchcraft” serial by Winfield Nevins, co-author of *Old Naumkeag*. Each article narrates biographies of the executed with photographs of local scenes. The 1892 guide thus represents a relatively frictionless coalition between witch-themed businesses, local historians, and popular media. This coalition was not longstanding. For just as 1992's events produced a sharp division among Salemites over the city's public representation—and tourism's role in it—so did 1892's.

Aftermath of the Bicentenary

Following the bicentenary, a select number of businesses were positioned to benefit from increased tourism through the approval of the *Visitor's Guide*. Conversely, many local historians reacted against the popularity of the witch brand.⁵ Several touring narratives written by residents during this time downplay the Trials. In 1897, for example, *Outlook Magazine* published Anna Benjamin's “Salem: Historic and Picturesque Features.” A brief guide, this article explicitly laments that the city will be forever “associated most closely with the memory of the fearful witchcraft delusion” (591). She highlights alternatives such as the Essex Institute and historical events such as Lafayette's visit. Nevins likewise published two articles in *New England Magazine* in 1893. One is a guide to Hawthorne's “homes and haunts” in Salem with no mention of the Trials. The second, entitled “The Study of Local History,” speaks directly to the surmounting public debate. Noting that “[g]uidebooks are written for almost every section of country,” he wonders who reads them, and bemoans, “Not always surely the man living

in the community about which they live" (28). The next sentence drives his point:

The Salem citizen turns the pages of a Plymouth guidebook; while the descendent of the Pilgrims, who, perhaps, could not tell where any of his ancestors are buried "on the hill," may be lost in the story of the Puritans at Salem. (28)

Nevins frames this as a failure of pedagogy in *patriotism* rather than isolationism. His call for residents to attend to their local histories (and for Salemites to engage more than the Trials) reveals the rising tensions surrounding Salem tourism.

Two artifacts from 1905 further illustrate these polarities. Writing in *New England Magazine*, Mary Northend dedicates remarkably few words to the Trials in her essay, "Historic Salem." Instead, she relies upon what would become typical counter-narratives: the Revolution, Salem's maritime glory, and Hawthorne. She concludes with an affectionate nod to Salem's "quaint houses, her old-time-gardens, and historic landmarks—reminders and associations that draw to her strangers from all parts of the Union with irresistible power" (522), but mentions no sites associated with the Trials as worthy to visit. Alternately, a Daniel Low quarter-page advertisement in a national magazine displays both a Salem Witch figurine and a compact touring guide that mentions several Trials sites. Similar ephemera demonstrate Salem businesses had moved to commodify the Trials dramatically following the bicentenary. One of the earliest Salem postcards (1898), for example, depicts the "Witch House" with an illustration of a crone. Three years later, a postcard fantasizes "Ye Salem Witches on Gallows Hill, Over Ye Old Witch Trees;" several hags fly upon brooms, accompanied by bats, black cats, and a devilish half-moon. By 1905, postcards offer "Greetings from Ye Olde Witch-City," and in 1907 announce, "We Ancient Witches, in Modern Way, Would Bring You Greetings from Salem Today."

Guidebooks from the turn of the century represent similar changes accompanying the rise of witch-themed commodities. The 1897 *Visitor's Guide*, then under the auspices of the Essex Institute, remains close in content and organization

to the 1892 edition, albeit with minor additions. Advertisements are banished except for the continuation of a chapter on souvenir shops. By 1902, however, a complete redesign appears. The book is reduced in volume; information concerning souvenir shops disappear, but so also do entries on notable residents and many localities. The chapters are rearranged and revised. They feature, in sequence, Hawthorne, the Witchcraft Delusion, the Essex Institute, the Peabody Academy of Science, Itineraries, and Excursions. Other historical events—notably the Revolution and colonial history—descend as subjects worthy of interest while those associated with the Trials flourish. The building referred to in all previous guides as the "Roger Williams House," for example, appears in the 1902 edition and thereafter as the "Corwin or Witch House."

This shift in naming, together with a reorganization to emphasize the Trials, suggests a yielding to tourist interests, themselves persuaded by a decade of aggressive advertising and the ubiquity of the witch brand. Caught between the pull of witch-themed businesses and the admonitions of local historians, the editors of the *Visitor's Guide* eventually elected to ratify the former and profit through association. But this decision did much more than follow the white heat of Trials tourism in the wake of 1892. As instruments whose rhetorical thrust lies in the transformation of curiosity to knowledge, the guidebooks' approval of the witch theme cast a sense of authority upon businesses celebrating it and encouraged visitors to identify with them. Guidebooks often arbitrate the contest of historical perceptions for the public, and in the case of Salem at the turn of the twentieth century, the match went to consumerism.⁶

Salem's Tercentenary

As the city neared its tercentenary in 1926, national popular media again intervened and encouraged the witch theme. In 1923, *Mentor* magazine published Hildegard Hawthorne's (Nathaniel's granddaughter) article, "The Witch

Panic in Salem,” to accompany a piece by Hendrik Willem Van Loon on witchcraft. Charles Cadman premiered his opera, “A Witch of Salem,” in Chicago in 1926. *The Scarlet Letter* appeared on film the same year, portraying Puritan intolerance. Local historians nevertheless continued to argue against singular attention on the Trials. Mary Northend published her nostalgic *Memories of Old Salem* (1917) and a book on historic doorways and architecture (1926). Sidney Perley released a three volume *The History of Salem, Massachusetts* (1924–1928). Caroline Emmerton, who in 1910 renovated the House of the Seven Gables to fund charitable organizations, advanced Hawthorne as a more tasteful tourist attraction.

Their efforts met abrasion from those favoring the witch theme, and the debate played out in guidebooks arriving for the city’s tercentenary. The Salem Evening News, for example, released *Highlights in the History of Salem*, a thin pamphlet with no advertisements that dedicates roughly the same amount of space to fifty-two events in the city, starting with the settlement and ending with the tercentenary week. It concludes with a rallying call to residents:

Thousands of strangers will be within our gates, and all Salemites, with their usual courtesy, will see to it that they have an enjoyable time. We are citizens of a city which has a proud history . . . and we should consider it a privilege to explain our many historical points of interest to those visiting us. Sell the city to them while they are here, and send them away with the idea that while Salem has been settled for 300 years, in reality she is but “300 years young” and a bright, smart, active community. (18)

This direct address is unusual for a guidebook, as it overtly recommends a moral imperative. It also evidences the demands set upon the local community by its visitors and those who seek to profit from them. History emerges a selling point, but the resident is further asked to represent a *complete* history. The Trials occupy only a single entry, tempered by a mitigating assertion that Salem recognized the fallacy of witchcraft long

before any other community and led the world towards a great awakening.

The Compass: An Illustrated Souvenir Guide to Salem, however, is replete with advertisements of “reliable firms with which the tourist can trade” (Reynolds 2) throughout its thirty-two pages and bricolage of noteworthy sites. Cemeteries, museums, historical houses, fraternal clubs, public buildings, and monuments are brought together in a chapter “What to See,” while others discuss Salem’s history, architecture, the Trials, shipping, the 1914 fire, Forest River Auto Camp, Derby Street, bandmaster Jean Missud, a potential airport, and two poems. This energetic rhetorical structure provides a sense of effervescent tourist experience, and the witch theme cements the guide, permeating the text. Finally, the *Tercentenary Program* issued by the Salem government for the July 4–10 celebration is divided into two sections. The first lists festivities, committees, and related information. Notable is a list of sixty-five floats participating in the “Historical Parade;” of these, only one stands for the Trials, representing the conviction of George Jacobs. The second, “Episodes in the History of Salem,” is a fifty page touring history based upon the *Visitor’s Guide*. Six chapters address the founding, Roger Williams’ exile, the Trials, the maritime legacy, contemporary institutions, and Hawthorne. These three guides suggest three very different ways of organizing a public anniversary. The one for residents emphasizes the Trials quite little, the one for tourists quite considerably, and the one for both moderately.

By the time of Salem’s tercentenary, the *Visitor’s Guide* itself had undergone a final major transformation. Revised completely by 1916, it swelled to 218 pages and included an itinerary map. The foremost change was the additional privilege granted the Trials, the chapter on which moved to prominence at the front. Hawthorne’s receded behind them and two new chapters on commerce and architecture. Entries on Revolutionary history were removed, while sections concerning the Essex Institute and Peabody Museum increased to describe their entire collections. The guidebook remained in this form, with only minor revisions and additions, until the 1960s, when publication ceased.⁷

Historic Salem

Salem was deeply impacted by the Great Depression and World War II. Many factories closed, and although the city appeared in popular media—in another film adaptation of *The Scarlet Letter* (1934), *Maid of Salem* (1937), *The House of the Seven Gables* (1940 and 1951), and the comedy *I Married a Witch* (1942)—a national tourism lull limited interest and accessibility. The hiatus allowed Salem residents to rethink allegiance to the witch theme, and local historians gained sway in public policy. The modest success of Emmerton's work at the House of the Seven Gables and the opening of the nation's first living history museum, Pioneer Village, in 1930 proved alternate models to Trials tourism were viable. As Salem's economy shifted, the local government took steps to modernize the city. This movement fostered the establishment of Historic Salem Incorporated, an organization dedicated to the preservation of antique buildings. HSI formed in 1944 to save the "Witch House" (as an historic structure) and Nathaniel Bowditch's home from demolition in the widening of Essex Street. Several years of intense activism followed and both buildings were granted museum status in 1948.⁸ Frances Robotti's successful *Chronicles of Old Salem* (1948) similarly presented an extensive history of Salem, and James Duncan Phillips' many books featured its maritime prominence.

The witch theme did not entirely disappear. According to local historian Jim McAllister, during the 1930s and 1940s the high school adopted a witch mascot and several businesses still utilized the brand (126). In 1935, the Old Witch Jail and Dungeon appeared as a tourist attraction. It was part of a house containing timbers and artifacts from the Trials jail, and ran a profit until it was demolished in 1956. But generally tourism moved away from the Trials in this period until three media events in the early 1950s altered the trajectory. In 1949, Marion Starkey published *The Devil in Massachusetts*, a highly accessible history written in novelistic style. A three-page feature in *Life* magazine drew international attention to the

book. In 1953, Arthur Miller premiered *The Crucible*, and CBS featured the Trials in the popular *You Are There* series hosted by Walter Cronkite. In the time of McCarthyism, Salem returned as a commanding symbol, and as tourism rekindled nationally in the 1950s, visitors began to return in search of the Trials experience.

Spanning this period and competing with the *Visitor's Guide* was *Streets and Homes in Old Salem*, written by Nellie Messer. It was introduced for a banker's convention in 1919, then revised in 1930 and several times thereafter until 1959. In 1960 E. C. Early took control and released a final version in 1963. It is a slim guide, originally an automobile itinerary brochure. Its first author sided with the historians and preservationists. Prior to this guidebook, she published several reviews of historic Salem homes such as the Ropes Mansion. In this venture, Messer established seven "sources of Salem's fame" and dedicated relatively equal ink to each. The Witchcraft Delusion is one, but alongside Revolutionary Activities and Salem Doorways. In 1930, she added a section on Pioneer Village. In the 1940s, she praised residents for their restoration activities:

For several generations, there have been outstanding Salem citizens who have shown much pride and loyalty in the preservation of land-marks, and the establishment of institutions for the betterment of their fellow-men. Old sites have been photographed: old houses carefully moved and restored. (8)

She continues, commending the recent activity by HSI. Her invocation is telling precisely for its downplay of the witch theme. *Streets and Homes* does not embrace the Trials with particular interest, and the accompanying advertisements (including Daniel Low) emphasize the antiquarian rather than witchcraft. Years later, Early added a section on Salem as a business center, noting companies such as Parker Brothers and Sylvania, but historicized them within a long tradition of Salem commerce.

This movement towards a wider historical scope was replicated in the designation of a "Historic Trail" for tourists by the Salem Chamber of

Commerce in the 1950s, which detailed relatively few Trials sites. And in 1955, Salem Five Cent Savings Bank presented *One Hundred Years in Salem*, a brief touring guide, in which no reference to the Trials appears. In summary, the national pause in tourism in the 1930s–1940s opened a door for an active group of residents to parry against the witch theme that had eclipsed all other historical events by degrees from 1892 until the 1920s. Their success informed guidebooks written at that time and influenced public policy with respect to historic preservation. By the mid-1950s, with tourism reemerging and Salem thriving in popular media, new debates sprung.

Witch City Returns

In the late-1960s, Salem was not only an active tourist destination, but a site of growing power struggles between local historians and those advocating the witch theme. The latter had gained ground incrementally since the early part of the decade, assisted by popular media. Miller's play was internally renowned. Interest in the supernatural had blossomed, inspired in part by occult films such as *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), *The Devil Rides Out* (1968), *Witchfinder General* (1968), and *The Exorcist* (1973). *Horror Hotel* (1960) introduced the idea of reincarnated Salem witches; another B movie, *Psyched by the 4D Witch* (1972), continued it. *Scooby Doo* cartoons premiered in 1969 and featured the "Witch of Salem" among its villains. Wicca and neo-pagan practices were popular among the counterculture. *Strange Unknown* magazine dedicated an issue to witchcraft in 1969 and included "The Horror of the Salem Witch Trials," an historical synopsis. Parker Brothers bought the rights for the *Ouija* board in 1966; the game outsold *Monopoly* the following year. *The House of the Seven Gables* returned to film in 1967. But of all media events, none more strongly influenced tourism than the "Salem Saga" episodes of the television show *Bewitched* in 1970. Filmed on location, they aired during the Halloween season and focused national attention on

the city just as preparations commenced for its 350th anniversary that would coincide with the national Bicentennial.

Other attractions arose in response. Wiccan high priestess Laurie Cabot arrived in 1971 to open a store and teach classes in contemporary witchcraft. Her move garnered extensive interviews by national magazines and newspapers tickled by the easy headlines, and Governor Michael Dukakis eventually named Cabot the "Official Witch of Salem." The Salem Witch Museum entered the scene in 1972. Within its walls, costumed mannequins (including a goat-like devil) and a booming recording retell a narrative of the Trials. The Witch Dungeon Museum soon followed. These attractions, created specifically to profit from a loose correlation of the Trials with modern witchcraft and the supernatural, heralded the arrival of contemporary Salem tourism.

Into this context emerged a new guidebook presented by the Salem Chamber of Commerce. Entitled *Historic Salem* in its earliest incarnation (ca. 1967), it was renamed *Be-Witched in Historic Salem*. Its cover remained consistent through a dozen editions into the early 1980s: a witch flying upon a broom with a black cat. This image—akin to the witch brand utilized at the turn of the century—flourished elsewhere in Salem at the same time. It was adopted by the Chamber of Commerce, local newspapers, and even the police department (McAllister 127). *Be-Witched's* textual evolution, however, tells a different story. Written by resident Henry Nichols, it was never excessive: forty-four pages in its first version, fifty-six in its final. It resists the Trials; their history assumes one-and-a-half pages of text that does not alter for the entire publication run. Two illustrations—including the grisly pressing of Giles Corey—were added in the change from *Historic Salem* to *Be-Witched* and a recollection about the Old Witch Jail appeared in the 1976 edition, but the guidebook dedicates considerable space to colonial foundations, the Revolution, the age of sail, institutes of learning, and historic homes. The Salem Witch Museum, Laurie Cabot, and the Witch Dungeon Museum are not mentioned in any printing.

Much of the writing is directed towards residents than tourists. The section on the Trials ends with typical moral discourse, for example, but uncharacteristically localized in its framing strategy:

[T]oday the Witchcraft Trials of 1692 live on in the memory of Salemites, reminding them of the tragic suffering and death which can result from ignorance and mob rule, as opposed to logic and democracy. (9)

The guidebook *does* address tourism. In *Historic Salem*, the introduction occupies two-and-a-half pages, ending with the 1914 fire. In the *Be-Witched* versions, it continues with mention of several industries and “the thousands of tourists who visit our Historic City” (6). This recognition, however, is not necessarily a warm embrace. First person plural forms appear with regularity in *Be-Witched*. This establishes a conversational tone, but also demarcates a distinction between *we* residents and *you* tourists.

Hawthorne’s biography occupies three pages, is not expanded in later editions, and an additional entry on the House of the Seven Gables highlights Emmerton’s Settlement Association rather than the author. This emphasis on historic homes derives from a local debate during that time. Historic Salem Incorporated reconvened in 1961 to protest the city’s urban renewal plans and possessed much clout from earlier successes. The organization quickly rose to controversy throughout the 1960s in attempts to save numerous buildings.⁹ In 1965 HSI initiated an “Old House Clinic” and in 1966 a house plaque program as a means to draw attention to Salem architecture. In the decade that followed HSI repeatedly clashed with the Salem Redevelopment Authority. Aware of a potential ally, HSI began to offer tours of historic homes as early as 1973 in an attempt to slow modernization by creating interest in the antique (Lindgren). *Be-Witched* is part of this legacy. Caught between several ideologies, it bears a seemingly conflicting set of signs: a tone of address sometimes favoring the local and sometimes the tourist audience, the presence of the witch logo despite a lack of Trials information, and a detailed account of HSI’s successes through-

out its pivotal years rather than newly-minted tourist attractions.

A friendly rival, *The Illustrated Salem Guide Book ... beyond Witch City*, was published in 1975. It was written by Robert Murray, one of the leading members of HSI, who also penned the historical play *Salem Chronicles* (1972) to benefit the organization. Murray was head of the Salem Bicentennial Commission, publishers of the book, and he addresses it to several audiences: armchair travelers, long-time residents, and visitors (1). That same year Salem was designated one of six “Visible Cities” in Massachusetts for the national Bicentennial. Murray took the opportunity to counter detractors of HSI, assuring readers that “Salem’s efforts to maintain its prestige as a modern city, while preserving its historic and environmental treasures, are symbolic of the entire nation’s efforts to progress without destroying the values of the Past” (5). It was a bold rhetorical maneuver. Whereas *Be-Witched* leaves its support for historic restoration implied, *Beyond* frames preservationist activity as patriotic, and in a political gesture to the antagonists of HSI, praises the “imaginative choice” of the Salem Redevelopment Authority to support renovation rather than demolition (24).

As the name suggests, *Beyond* downplays the witch theme and reemphasizes Salem’s role in other historical events such as the Revolution. Its “Brief History” section, for example, dedicates only two paragraphs to the Trials and does not feature them on walking tours, recommending instead homes and churches intimately involved in the Commission’s Visitor’s Hospitality Centers program. The Witch House and the Salem Witch Museum are included as final entries of a dozen “Main Attractions,” but the entry on the former emphasizes HSI’s salvaging project. Murray describes HSI as an “energetic historic society” (70), and in the section “Entertainment in Salem” commemorates their political activities:

Most weeks have a public meeting or hearing about some controversial subject—high-rise housing, zoning regulations, dog-leash laws, sewers, etc. For the curious, a visit into the meeting rooms of Salem where democracy

struggles with problems unique to an old town, can be “entertainment” in its original meaning. Some feel that the best show in town—sometimes tragic, sometimes comic, frequently melodramatic—takes place in the handsome old Council Chambers on the second floor of CITY HALL on each first and third Thursday evenings beginning at 7:30 p.m. Old time Grandstanding, error, and eloquence, combat with one another while portraits of Elders look on expressionlessly. (71)

Unlike *Be-Witched*, *Beyond* serves as an advertising vehicle for Salem businesses catering to tourists, but with limitations. Murray commends, for example, the “concerned citizens [who] recently persuaded Burger King from building” (64) on the location of the Continental Congress in 1774. He nods to Daniel Low, comparing it with Harrod’s in London, but this praise is set within the context of the company’s longevity—that is, its historical significance to the city. Instead of drawing a divide between witch-themed businesses and those fearing exploitation, Murray cuts between the home-grown and venerable against the corporate and recent. Businesses that once were adversaries became welcomed temporary allies. And while commercial interest in the witch theme was strengthening, local historians managed to keep it in check by translating tourist capital into tangible power and emphasizing Salem’s entire history as the symbolic frame for the guidebooks of the 1960s–70s.

History Repeats Itself

In 1982, as the guidebook *Be-Witched* ended its run, a group of businesses led by the Salem Witch Museum’s owner initiated “Haunted Happenings” for the autumn holiday. Christening the city the “Halloween Capital of the World,” they launched a seasonal tourism blitz that continues to this day and that now attracts hundreds of thousands from all over the globe. With it returned controversy concerning the witch theme. In 1984, the first guidebook dedicated exclusively

to the Trials appeared. Written by David Brown, *A Guide to the Salem Witchcraft Hysteria of 1692* opens with a confession:

This work was born of personal frustration in my attempts to locate the important sites associated with the witchcraft delusion. Not a native of Massachusetts, I felt somewhat obliged to provide a written account for those who, like myself, visit the Salem area infrequently and desire to see the sites of the witchcraft. On my previous visits to Salem I could never locate a thorough and comprehensive guide to the events in 1692. (ix)

The book is meticulously researched with respect to events and locales, but also introduces a new kind of Salem guidebook, written by tourists for tourists.

The years leading up to the tercentenary of the Trials demonstrated a pattern similar to the bicentenary. Scholarly and non-academic accounts flourished. Divergent forms of popular media featured touring information, ranging from *Ideals* magazine (November 1990) to Chevrolet’s travel journal *Friends* (for Halloween 1992). The film industry heavily promoted Salem: *Love at Stake* (1988), *Teen-Witch* (1989), and *Hocus-Pocus* (1993) all reference it, and *The Crucible* (1996) followed with a celebrity lineup. Similarly, in 1994 the Travel and Discovery Channels celebrated Salem in their *Mysterious Places* and *Rediscovering America* series, respectively. In 1996, ABC launched *Sabrina the Teenage Witch*, set in a fictional Massachusetts town. Based upon the Archie Comics character and casting a feline warlock named Salem, one episode depicts the heroine touring the contemporary city as a living history experiment. Influenced by the growing national excitement and success of Haunted Happenings, guidebooks dominated by the Trials appeared. William Story’s *The Witchcraft Hysteria of Salem Town and Salem Village in 1692*, first saw publication in 1991 and was expanded several times until 1997. It is strictly an itinerary for touring witchcraft sites. Marilynne Roach released *Gallows and Graves: The Search to Locate the Death and Burial Sites of the People Executed for Witchcraft in 1692* in 1997.

Following the tercentenary, non-residents were as likely to write guidebooks as residents. Deborah Kent's *Salem, Massachusetts* (1996), for example, addresses young adults; the author hails from the Midwest. In 2001, New Jersey resident Lynda Macken published *Haunted Salem & Beyond*, and although asserting "the city's rich history consists of much more than the dark times" (1), she links the Trials with contemporary supernatural activities. In 2002, British native Frances Hill released *Hunting for Witches: A Visitor's Guide to the Salem Witch Trials*, another thorough study of historical sites. Hill directly addresses the uneasy role of witch-themed commercialization in Salem tourism, but her contribution further illustrates that in the period preceding and following the tercentenary, Salem residents lost control in representing their city's historical significance to the public as the Trials eclipsed all other topics of tourist interest.

Recognizing this dilemma, the Chamber of Commerce—in its new manifestation as Destination Salem—set out to counterbalance egregious representations of Witch City. In 1993, it renamed its tourism brochure "Sea More than Witches," and began to advance other aspects of the city's history. In 2004, its cover featured the Peabody Essex Museum and Hawthorne exclusively.¹⁰ William Story similarly released another touring pamphlet, "Four Historic Faces of Salem, Massachusetts" in 1995; he identifies the Trials, maritime history, Hawthorne, and "historic architecture" accordingly. In 1997 the documentary *Witch City* condemned all representations of the witch theme, turning to Hawthorne as a guiding symbol. This impulse is, I contend, itself part of the ebb and flow of the city's history and replayed the divisions that followed the bicentenary. Indeed, the tension over tourism is as much a part of Salem's history as the Trials or Hawthorne or its maritime grandeur. The latter reaction is complicated by twentieth-century media, celebrity culture, and faddish behavior associated with a consumer capitalism that was in infancy in the late-nineteenth century, but the repetition is striking. New to this paradigm, however, is the role played by non-resident representations. For all the

contests wrought through the previous century of guidebooks, their production was an intimate part of Salem's civic identity and an opportunity for local voices to shape tourist experience.

In 2000, another formulation appeared in the guidebook, *Salem Women's Heritage Trail*. It is a collaborative effort between a non-resident scholar (Bonnie Hurd Smith) and Salem residents; concerns about local identity come to the fore directly, and unlike commercial guides to the region (such as *Fodor's* or *Travel Bug*), it overtly stresses a mode of listening to the community. It also focuses on aspects of Salem's history silenced under the weight of Trials tourism. Following an introduction describing how Smith came to write the book with the help of locals, it presents fifty-two sites associated with Salem women. The tour begins at the House of the Seven Gables, (re-)named the "Home of Susannah Ingersoll and Mary Turner Sargent." Readers are led to historic homes, old mills, institutes of learning, and political organizations. The narratives of women—white and African-American, and from all classes and immigrant groups—and their roles in American history (such as the abolitionist, conservationist, and birth control movements) transform locations passed over in other guidebooks into significant sites. No advertisements appear, and the Trials are relegated to a single entry on the memorial dedicated in 1992. As a guidebook that performs a progressive politics, *Salem Women* continues a long legacy of debate between those who wish preserve a "complete" history and those who wish to profit from fantastical versions of it.

Conclusion

Tourism is history's Gordian knot. In the often contentious struggle between local historians and businesses moving to capitalize on tourist interests, the meaning of any historical event opens to continual interpretation and debate. The rise of consumer capitalism, under which all experience may be commodified, sensationalized, and toured, only intensifies these stakes. But the implications

of these debates concern more than a quarrel between preservation and profit. They entail the very construction of civic identity and participation in community woven into the lives of residents and visitors to any tourist location. Guidebooks offer a wealth of information concerning local development, but as a political voice of tourism, they are also influential barometers of attitudes towards the past, present, and future. Their rhetorical work unveils strategies for people to cast their community and history upon others.

In the venerable case of Salem, its guidebooks constitute a certain pattern: gravitation towards the Trials and witch theme, usually at significant anniversaries and often inspired by outside media, followed by a critical reaction among a contingency of residents, followed by a retreat to other historical events until a new generation or anniversary starts the pattern anew. Fueling this practice are local arguments and shifting alliances. From the 1850s to the bicentenary in 1892, a loose affiliation of historians and businesses met with relative comfort as the tourist market emerged. Divisions arose from 1892 to the 1920s as the witch theme became dominant in public representation of the city; the tension between those favoring rampant commodification and those resisting it was apparent in public discourse for the city's tercentenary in 1926. The 1930s and 1940s created opportunities for local historians to mollify or repel the witch association and advance other aspects of Salem's history in an effort to forefront preservation rather than commercialization. The 1950s and 1960s brought a renewed interest in the supernatural and the Trials that inspired new alignments and contests for power, but the historians maintained the upper hand through the 1970s. In the 1980s local representation ceded as burgeoning national interest in the Trials returned for the tercentenary. Since 1992, sharp divisions have again arose in reaction to a greatly-intensified reliance upon the witch theme. The guidebooks of all these periods were instrumental—if not fundamental—in defining values, solidifying tourist expectations, and promoting public policy. They now stand further complicated with the influx of outsiders assuming respon-

sibility to define and speak for the local community, but the impact of these rhetorical expressions upon Salem is evident.

The significance of this model is also far-reaching. History is, after all, a set of performances with profound consequences. Those who write its scripts and set its stages may be motivated for different reasons and perspectives, but all of us play its roles and attend its audience. And as the tumultuous record of Salem guidebooks demonstrate, precisely who defines the historically valuable matters. Deeming events and places worthy of tourism is politics in its most deliberate sense, the achievement of particular ends through the practice of particular means of representation. As guidebooks mediate between local and national (and even international) identities, policies, and agendas, their communicative status in the exchange of influences should not be disregarded as mere gossamer. The local influences the grand narrative by mapping its humbler possibilities onto the moving bodies of residents and visitors and readying them for more broadly defined identities. Salemites and Salem tourists, though often at odds with one another, move to become "Americans," for example, largely through their understanding of commonalities wrought by a received history. Guidebooks are a contributing means to establish the rhythm of that reception. As their representations and judgments change in the competition for capital, so also do spaces for ideological contests and for social possibilities. The ability to control the interpretation of tourist experience is of primary importance to the organization and experience of the political world, then, even if played out in everyday ephemera and presumably fleeting rhetorical forms.

Notes

1. Most of the witchcraft hysteria occurred in Salem Village, now Danvers, where relatively few tourists visit the archaeological and historical sites. Contemporary Salem inherited Trials tourism largely due to its name associations and marketing.

2. White (54) argues that early tourism did not promote the Trials, but his assessment is based on a single guidebook from 1908.

3. It was renamed the Peabody Academy of Science and then the Peabody Museum in 1867; the Essex Institute was founded in 1848. The two merged in 1992.

4. The stereograph does not mention Roger Williams and attributes the house's construction to 1642.

5. I do not wish to suggest an absolute distinction; Frank Cousins, for example, contributed to a book on colonial architecture while profiting from souvenir sales.

6. An independent guidebook from 1906 confirms the Essex Institute's decision by offering an alternative approach. Albert Dennis's *What to See in Salem* highlights five aspects in equal measure: Salem in Massachusetts history, the Witchcraft Craze, the Revolution, sea commerce, and Hawthorne.

7. The *Visitor's Guide* did change in minor ways, such as the editing of a chapter on "Public Buildings" in the 1937 edition into one on "Historical Landmarks" in 1953. The written accounts were rarely altered, however, so that what served as appropriate history to an audience in 1916 was precisely the same in 1953.

8. *Yankee Magazine* featured HSI in a 1951 article.

9. See <http://www.historysaalem.org>

10. The 2004 Destination Salem brochure attempts to neutralize Trials exploitation. In a section entitled "Name Dropping," for example, it includes biographical sketches of notable Salemites and famous visitors. In 2006, the brochure was entitled "Experience the Unexpected," and begins its brief history identifying Salem as "The City of Peace."

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